

"Main Library" by Danye Romine Powell

Commissioned for One for the Books, November 2021

Main Library, Charlotte, N.C., 1903-2021

From the rubble by the old Tryon Street Baptist rose
Andrew Carnegie's 1903 dream -- four ionic columns

and a cupola awash in sunshine. Such elegance!
But it's not the structure. It's what that structure creates

inside each one of us. Be it brick and mortar. Glass
and marble. Or soaring terraces. A library's essence

will always be a beam of yellow light shining deep
into the black sea of ignorance and confusion.

That red Coke machine once behind the front desk
signaled an airy pleasure dome, free, open to all, a place

to read, dream, warm yourself with a sip of mythical sherry
from Carson McCullers' flask. Or to ask Toni Morrison

or Lee Smith or Kurt Vonnegut for an autograph.
(Lucky you, to arrive before his nicotine fit.) A bow

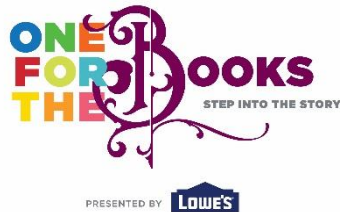
to the Spanglers and the Robinsons who gave and gave,
to the amazing Allegra Westbrook and to Bearden, whose

New Dawn depicts the earthy succor of a loving childhood,
a succor akin to the best libraries have to offer. We won't

forget the imposing card catalogues, the oak tables and chairs,
sturdy as our elders. The irritable crank of the microfilm machine

on the second floor before there was a third. We won't forget
Anne and Jenny and Jan. Or Rosemary or Mary Louise.

Here's to nearly twelve decades on this spot -- patrons, staff,
minds and spirits forever alive in the very air we breathe.



"One For the Books" by Boris "Bluz" Rogers

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One For the Books

Since 1903 after a donation 25K from Andrew Carnegie

this place of brick and mortar has stood

a bastion for books

as a landmark, and sanctuary where words form to create an escape from or to, a reality

A place where imagination is built on the foundation of dreams and bounded spines

over time, this place has become home,

or haven, or hope or history holder

this place has always sat on this corner collecting stories, watching buildings rise and fall

weathering seasons and political storms

to seeing the social norms change with first Black Mayors and Presidents

to setting a precedent with North Carolina's first Black library on Brevard

we have learned so much

from within these walls.

Where we come from,

this small, dirt road town turned concrete street city with big banking personality,

smiles into a southern sun and says

Look at us! Look how we have turned a gift into a goldmine!

Look at how Hoyt Galvin annexed and integrated

the library systems so they could equally service all of Mecklenburg's citizens!

Before you had Google, you had a librarian,

a mastermind on how to find the right answer every time.

They could Dewey Decimal with the best of them,

rocket thru references, make suggestions on what new novel to pick up

how to look up news article on microfiche,

their research talents never ceased,

and they got savvy with the changing technology.

1980, brought us the Automated Library information system,

then we started thinking out of the box with the opening of the Idea Box

build a world wide community with a virtual village

so we could move forward with innovation

and look at us now,

accessing the library from any place, at any time

helping shape young minds by giving them the space to be themselves

they are the next amazing book on the shelf
the next Shel Silverstein, or Stephen King,
Maya Angelou, or Judy Blume, Langston Hughes, or Alice Walker
walking into their greatness because this place has been here for 100 years,
waiting
holding space, for them
and so we begin a new chapter, a new book, a new building, a new foundation
for the next generation to build THEIR library
but it all remains right here, on this corner of history
this nook where words live, survive, and carry on our story.

We are the people in these pages, that lived within these walls
this is for us, this, is one for the books.